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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 28 January 2011 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate, with deepening unrest and instability on the ground. This deterioration is clearly linked to the illegal, destructive and provocative policies and practices of Israel, the occupying Power, and its provocations and incitement against the Palestinian people. This includes ongoing acts of violence against the Palestinian civilian population by Israeli settlers, illegally transferred to the Occupied Territory and clearly constituting part of the occupying forces. Settler terror, harassment and destruction continue unabated, on a daily basis, without fear of punishment or being brought to justice for their crimes against the Palestinian people.

Over the past few days, acts of lawlessness and terror being perpetrated by Israeli settlers have intensified and have included, among other crimes, the beating and killing of Palestinian civilians, including children; the torching of fields and orchards; the vandalizing of homes and vehicles; and harassment and humiliation of Palestinians. Such illegal actions by settlers are perpetrated in full view of the Israeli occupying forces, who, instead of imposing law and order upon these radical settlers, are actually enabling their crimes through the military and financial assistance and protection accorded to them.

In this regard, I must draw your attention to the following illegal, brutal actions committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and their properties in the current period. Yesterday, 27 January 2011, an Israeli settler from the illegal settlement of "Bracha" shot and killed a Palestinian teenager in the village of Iraq Burin near Nablus in the Occupied West Bank. Uday Maher Qadous, aged 18, was fired upon by a settler as he worked on his family's orchard and was killed instantly by a bullet to the left side of his chest. Qadous's lifeless body was left in the field for over an hour and a half before medical crews were able to take him to a nearby hospital. Tragically, Qadous is the third civilian from the village of Iraq Burin to be killed by terrorist settlers over the past year.

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Also yesterday, settlers from the illegal settlement of "Sousia" attacked two Palestinian shepherds from the town of Yatta, south of Al-Khalil (Hebron), with iron bars, leaving one in serious condition. Israeli occupying forces looked on and did nothing to stop the settlers from attacking the Palestinian shepherds. Instead, the occupying forces arrested two Palestinians who were in the vicinity, including a photographer who was documenting the attack. Also yesterday, another Palestinian farmer was beaten severely by an Israeli settler from the illegal settlement of "Betar Eilit". In the Palestinian village of Ainabus, in the Nablus area, Israeli settlers from the illegal settlement of "Yitzhar" entered the village, breaking the fence of a home and setting a car ablaze.

Such acts of terror continued today with an attack by settlers from the illegal "Bat Ayin" settlement against Palestinian civilians from the village of Safa, north of Al-Khalil (Hebron). In this latest attack, two Palestinians were injured. Of the two injured, Yousef Fakhri Mousa Ikhiel, aged 17, remains in critical condition and on life support, after sustaining gunshot wounds to the head.

At the same time, the Israeli occupying forces have continued to commit innumerable other grave violations against the Palestinian people subjugated under this brutal military occupation. Today, 28 January 2011, near the sealed-off Sufa commercial crossing point in the besieged Gaza Strip, Adham Abu Selima, aged 13, was violently killed as an Israeli explosive went off as he grazed his sheep. Also, on 20 January 2011, Salem Mohammed Samoudi, from the town of Al-Yamoun, north of Jenin, was killed by occupying forces manning an Israeli checkpoint nearby, and three other civilians, including a child, were injured in the attack. It is imperative to note that the Israeli occupying forces denied Samoudi access to medical treatment for several hours after he was shot, further violating the victim's human rights.

Moreover, in the Occupied West Bank, non-violent peaceful demonstrations organized by Palestinian civilians and international human rights defenders in protest of Israel's continued illegal construction of the Wall and settlements continue to be met with violence from the Israeli occupying forces. On Friday, 21 January 2011, scores of peaceful protestors were injured, some seriously, in the villages of Bil'in, Ni'lin and Beit Reema, by the firing of rubber-coated bullets, sound bombs, tear-gas canisters, and even hot gas, which was sprayed onto the face of one protestor.

In addition to these acts of violence and depravity by the occupying forces and their militant, extremist settlers, the occupying Power also continues to construct and expand illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, in grave breach of international law and in flagrant defiance of the international calls for a full cessation of settlement activities in the Palestinian land occupied by Israel since 1967. Just last week, the Security Council, in its open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", heard the clear calls by the entire international community reaffirming the illegality of Israel's settlement activities and the undeniable fact that they are a major obstacle to peace.

As repeatedly cautioned by the Palestinian leadership, Israel's settlement campaign constitutes an existential threat to the two-State solution for peace in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, including the land for peace principle, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. Despite this and despite the fact that over 100 Member States have signed on

to the draft resolution currently before the Security Council (S/2011/24), which rejects Israel's unlawful settlement campaign and calls for its complete cessation, the occupying Power brazenly continues this illegal campaign to the grave detriment of peace prospects and further raising tensions on the ground, especially in Occupied East Jerusalem.

Indeed, the occupying Power has only responded to the global calls for a halt to its illegal actions with further illegal actions and defiance. In this regard, on 15 January 2011, the Israeli Government once again announced plans for the expansion of illegal settlements in Occupied East Jerusalem. More than 1,400 illegal settlement units were recently approved in the settlement of "Gilo", which is built on land confiscated from the Palestinian villages of Beit Jala, Sharafat and Beit Safafa. In addition, on Sunday, 23 January 2011, Israeli bulldozers destroyed more Palestinian agricultural land, uprooting olive trees and dozens of grapevines and almond trees in the town of Al Khader, south of Bethlehem, for the purpose of expanding a Jewish-only bypass road to serve the illegal settlement of "Daniel" nearby.

It must be recalled that this blatant, relentless colonization of the Palestinian land has been perpetrated by the occupying Power in deliberate and grave breach of the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Settlement construction, expansion and transfer of Israeli settlers also constitute direct and serious violations of numerous Security Council resolutions as well as of obligations undertaken by Israel under the Quartet road map. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable for such ongoing and systematic breaches of its legal obligations. Adoption by the Security Council of the draft resolution before it would surely contribute in this regard, sending the proper and strong message to the Israeli Government that such illegal policies and actions will no longer be tolerated by the international community, which has directly and clearly stated its aim to end the occupation that began in 1967 and achieve a peaceful settlement, and thus rejects any and all such illegal measures intended to further entrench Israel's occupation of the Palestinian land and acquire more territory by force.

The grave situation before us requires urgent attention and serious action by the international community. The Security Council must uphold its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It must reaffirm its rejection of Israel's settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and not waver in its demand for a complete cessation. At the same time, the international community must not waver in its calls for a halt to all other illegal policies and practices, including those committed by illegal Israeli settlers, that are jeopardizing the situation on the ground and seriously sabotaging the possibility of achieving the two-State solution for peace on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. If Israel continues to ignore the mounting global calls in this regard, it should face serious and real consequences. The double standard in dealing with Israel, the occupying Power, must come to an end. It is high time for the international community to display its resolve and bring Israel into compliance, once and for all, if there is to be any promotion of a climate truly conducive to the pursuit of peace. Otherwise, there is great risk of further destabilization of this fragile situation, with vastly negative repercussions in the area as well as throughout the region.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 382 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 11 January 2011 (A/ES-10/509-S/2011/9), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations